

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 AMMAN 05853 110618Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----082509 112323Z /75

R 110610Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6784
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

S E C R E T AMMAN 05853

EXDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, PGOV, JO, SY, XF
SUBJECT: MIDDLE EAST PEACE NEGOTIATIONS: SYRIAN ATTITUDES

1. JORDANIAN ELDER STATESMAN ABDUL MONEM RIFAI RELATED TO AMBASSADOR ON JULY 9 FOLLOWING ASSESSMENT OF SYRIAN ATTITUDES TOWARD MIDDLE EAST PEACE NEGOTIATIONS, WHICH BASED ON ACTUAL DIRECT CONTACT WITH PRESIDENT ASSAD, FONMIN KHADDAM AND OTHER HIGH-RANKING SYRIANS DURING PAST FEW DAYS.

2. SYRIANS REMAIN CONVINCED THAT SADAT IS DOING DAMAGE TO ARAB CAUSE THROUGH CONTINUING PURSUIT OF HIS PEACE INITIATIVE. ASSAD HAD MENTIONED THAT SADAT HAD EVEN HURT PRESIDENT CARTER'S EFFORTS SINCE SADAT JERUSALEM VISIT HAD ABORTED CARTER'S EFFORTS TO MOVE PEACE PROCESS TO GENEVA CONFERENCE.

3. RIFAI SAID ASSAD IS NOT CURRENTLY WORRIED ABOUT PROSPECT OF A SEPARATE EGYPTIAN PEACE WITH ISRAEL OVER SINAI. SYRIANS WOULD, HOWEVER, BE TREMENDOUSLY CONCERNED IF JORDAN WAS DRAWN INTO PEACE NEGOTIATIONS

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ALONGSIDE EGYPT SINCE THIS WOULD BRING FORTH PROSPECT OF LEAVING SYRIA OUT OF NEGOTIATIONS AND IMPLICATION OF A SHARP SYRIAN REACTION AGAINST JORDAN. RIFAI SAID BEST SOLUTION THEREFORE WOULD BE TO GO TO GENEVA SO THAT SYRIA COULD BE BROUGHT BACK INTO THE NEGOTIATIONS.

4. RIFAI IMPLIED THAT SYRIA IS CONCERNED OVER ITS POSSIBLE ISOLATION IN PEACE PROCESS. ASSAD TOLD HIM THAT SYRIA DECLINES TO COME UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF ANY SUPER POWER IN ITS FOREIGN POLICY AND RIFAI IMPLIED THIS MAY ADD ELEMENT OF FURTHER CONCERN OVER SYRIAN ISOLATION

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SYRIA HAS SERIOUS DIFFERENCES WITH NOT ONLY IRAQ, BUT ALSO WITH ALGERIA AND LIBYA. ASSAD HAD SPOKEN EXTREMELY CRITICALLY, FOR INSTANCE OF LIBYA.
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5. RIFAI SAID SYRIA HAD SHOWN SOME CONCERN OVER RUMORS OF JORDANIAN/ PLO RELATIONSHIP. RIFAI, WHO HAS EXCELLENT CONTACTS WITH THE PLO, SAID THAT AFTER TALKING WITH ARAFAT, KHALID AL-FAHUM AND ZUHAYR MUHSIN AND QUIZZING THE JORDANIAN AMBASSADOR TO SYRIA (WHO IS SUPPOSEDLY ENGAGING IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE PLO ON BEHALF OF THE GOJ), RIFAI HAD CONCLUDED THAT THERE IS LITTLE OR NO SUBSTANCE TO THESE RUMORS OF JORDANIAN/PLO DIALOGUE. HE IMPLIED HE HAD TOLD THE SYRIANS AS MUCH.
PICKERING

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, NEGOTIATIONS, PEACE PLANS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 11 jul 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978AMMAN05853
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780284-0521
Format: TEL
From: AMMAN
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780777/aaaacmiz.tel
Line Count: 82
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 32596078-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2059151
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MIDDLE EAST PEACE NEGOTIATIONS: SYRIAN ATTITUDES
TAGS: PEPR, PGOV, JO, SY, XF
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/32596078-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014